

The South Danvers Observer

"The Greatest Anxiety": South Danvers on the Eve of the Civil War

The South Danvers Observer is published quarterly.

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"We are in the midst of a financial panic. Everybody says it is the most severe and destructive we have ever experienced. People shake their heads and talk despairingly and look gloomily on the future. . . Although we cannot see the end, we know the end will come. Let us look beyond it then to a brighter future."

From the Dec. 19, 1860
South Danvers Wizard

—It has been said that history often repeats itself.

In many ways that is true, especially with regard to the issues South Danvers faced in 1860, issues that are all too familiar to our country 150 years later. The problems can be seen in our daily newspapers—the ongoing repercussions from a financial meltdown; growing concerns over immigration; and the increasing threat of war.

Like many towns in Essex County, South Danvers' population had risen dramatically in the previous twenty years. In 1840, the population of both the North and South Parishes of Danvers (which included the present day Danvers and Peabody) was 5020. Twenty years later the population for both towns was 11,664. A little more than half of that population lived in South Danvers (6560), drawn there by its manufacturers, manufacturers that were the cause for a growing number of immigrants to choose South Danvers as home. By 1860, almost 10% of the town's population were immigrants.

Under normal circumstances, such an increase in potential workers would have been a boon

South Danvers Center a decade before the Civil War

to the town. Especially because its separation from Danvers in 1855 created a need for new taxpayers.

But in 1857, the country endured an economic panic, which caused stock prices to plummet by half and forced thousands of businesses to declare bankruptcy. It wasn't long before South Danvers felt the effects. In 1856 and 1857, just after its separation from Danvers, the town's debt wasn't much more than its operating budget of

around \$25,000. By 1860, the debt had doubled and by 1862 had almost quadrupled.

Local businesses struggled to stay afloat. Notices of 'insolvency' or bankruptcy appeared more frequently in the town's newspaper, the *South Danvers Wizard*. More stores became 'cash stores', refusing to sell on credit.

These anxieties about the economy and the need to find work affected people's views on immigration, on the labor struggles in Lynn and on the growing threat of war.

Assignee's Notice.
COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS. Essex, ss. Court of Insolvency. In the case of
ENGLISH & FOSTER, of South Danvers,
said county, insolvent debtors, the undersigned hereby gives notice of his appointment as Assignee of the estate of said English & Foster.
The second meeting of the creditors of said insolvent debtors will be held at the Court of Insolvency at Salem, in said county of Essex, on the ninth day of December next, at ten o'clock in the forenoon, at which meeting creditors may prove their claims.
BENJ. C. PERKINS, Assignee.
South Danvers, Nov. 18, 1861. n20

Insolvency
Notice
South
Danvers
Wizard
Dec. 4, 1861

The South Danvers Horse Railroad

From
The South
Danvers
Wizard
January 23,
1861

To come more to the point, and after much consideration and calculation, I freely say that I think the establishment of a horse railway between our village and Salem one of the most absurd enterprises that could be thought of.

—The question posed on July 11, 1860 was simple enough.

Why didn't South Danvers, an ancient and yet up and coming town, not have the convenience of a Horse Railroad?

That all too innocent inquiry stirred up emotions and exposed the undercurrent of anxiety which existed in many of the residents.

Ridicule came swiftly.

Railroads required steam power, **not** horse power. The Omnibus could drop people off anywhere along its route; the Horse Railroad would **abandon** customers at designated stops rather than deliver them to their desired locations. The owners of the Omnibuses, Moses Shackley and Henry M. Merrill, had invested heavily in the business in 1853. Moreover, they ran their coaches every half hour and sometimes as often as every fifteen minutes. Didn't they deserve better than to have the town push for such a change? **And**, according to the owners of the Omnibuses, their

coaches seldom held more than five passengers at a time. Why the need for something larger? In one letter, Moses Shackley and Henry Merrill went so far as to insinuate that their services to the town had been so invaluable that the investors and new owners of the Horse Railroad should reward them by buying them out.

Between July of 1860 and through 1861, there were nearly two dozen letters to the editor and opinion articles printed in the *South Danvers Wizard* regarding the switch from the Omnibus to the Horse Railroad.

In the end, though, progress, and the recognition of the convenience of the Horse Railroad outweighed most of the objections. The Horse Railroad opened April 2, 1862 and remained in operation until the electric trolley was introduced into Peabody in 1891.



The Stagecoach in South Danvers Square in 1848 and the Omnibus below, in 1854



The Horse Railroad in Downtown Peabody in 1870

THE SOUTH DANVERS HORSE RAILROAD Through Lynn to Boston in one hour without change of cars

"We like to ride in a railway car,
Whether drawn by steam or horsepower,
For a two forty gait we will always hurrah,
Which will take us to town in one hour.
The crack of the whip and the loud hi-yah,
Is certain to make a man laugh,
It reminds us of Flora, the queen of the turf,
In her two twenty-two and a half.
But before a man rides in a car or a coach,
He will always examine his clothes,
And if he's in want of a Vest or a Coat,
Down to CRESSEY & HALE he goes.
A splendid assortment of Boots and Shoes,
May always be found at their store;
If you wish for a bargain, no time should you lose,
But drive downtown to one thirty four Main
Street, South Danvers.

From the *South Danvers Wizard*
January 16, 1861

South Danvers and the Lynn Shoeworkers Strike

—In a time when the rights of workers and unions' ability to bargain for its members are making national newspapers, it is interesting to remember that the largest strike for workers' rights before the Civil War began in the city of Lynn.

Like South Danvers, Lynn had been hard hit by the Panic of 1857. Many shoeworkers in Lynn lost their jobs. Consequently, the demand for leather in South Danvers fell. When conditions began to improve, though, manufacturers refused to hire the shoeworkers back at their old rates. Instead, they offered them much lower wages. For working sixteen hours a day for six days a week, a man earned \$3 and a woman only \$1.

As worker unrest grew, they demanded a return to the older wages, but the factory owners refused. Over 3,000 shoeworkers chose Feb. 22, 1860, George Washington's birthday, to walk out.

Not long after, on March 7th, during an enormous blizzard, more than 5,000 men and 1,000 women marched through the streets of Lynn to demand better pay.

South Danvers watched the strike with great interest. Some hoped that the workers would never be allowed to return, thereby opening up jobs to those in South Danvers. Others blamed the 'dirty Irish' for being behind the movement. They saw them as nothing more than rabble rousers. And some believed the workers' cause to be just.

"Our opinion of the whole demonstration is that it was ridiculous, and considering the plea of poverty which is put forth by the strikers, wickedly extravagant, since the money spent for music alone would have given a hundred families that day a good dinner. . . .all such demonstrations deserve our contempt . . .

From the March 7, 1860
South Danvers Wizard



From the Feb.
29th, 1860
South Danvers
Wizard

Of course, how Lynn and other shoeworking communities fared affected the price of leather and therefore, South Danvers.

Others cities and towns throughout Massachusetts followed Lynn's example. Shoeworkers from Newburyport, Haverhill, Marblehead and Natick walked out in protest. Local grocers and other businesses sent food to the strikers in support of their protest.

On March 17th, 10,000 shoe workers marched from Lynn, Salem, Marblehead and other Essex County towns in the largest demonstration for labor before the Civil War. Police from Boston as well as the militia were called in to prevent violence. Police were also used to insure that strikers didn't interfere with shoes being shipped out of state.

The strike soon came to the attention of the new president, Abraham Lincoln. While he spoke in support of the workers, factory owners refused to budge. Unable to endure ongoing weeks without an income, most workers returned to their jobs by the end of March.

The strike ended completely in April 1860.

"When I heard there was a strike in Lynn a week ago among the shoeworkers I was attracted by a curiosity to see how the discontented cordwainers would make battle with capital. . . .I found the square filled with a dense throng that looked as if it might have been transported from Dublin or Cork, except that it was less ragged than the great unwashed of those cities are reported to be, so unmistakably Irish were the faces of the great majority."

From the March 7, 1860
South Danvers Wizard

South Danvers' Entertainments in 1860

Peabody Billiard Hall.

BATCHELDER'S BUILDING, MAIN STREET,

SOUTH DANVERS.

H. C. LARRABEE— (Proprietors) —A. W. FORNISS.
Jan 13 1860

From The South Danvers Wizard
Jan. 18, 1860



DOLLIE DUTTON, the Little Fairy, standing on her father's hand.

LEEVES OF "THE LITTLE FAIRY," MISS DOLLIE DUTTON.

THE SMALLEST GIRL IN THE WORLD OF her age, 10 years old, 20 inches high, and weighing only 15 pounds, an infinitely greater curiosity than then, each Levee made selections from them:

When I was Single: My Grandmother's Advice to Young Ladies: The Evening Star: I once was a Maiden: Common Bill: I want to get Married, and the Temperance Song. She will be assisted in her Levees by Little WILLIAMINA KAPPS and Master GEORGE MONK.

PEABODY INSTITUTE.

as follows: 1st Levee, Wednesday afternoon, June 12th, at 3 o'clock; 2d Levee, Wednesday Evening, June 12th, at 8 o'clock.

Admission 15 cts. Children 10 cts.

Children under Ten Years of age, in the afternoon, 5 cents.

Doors open at 2 o'clock.

From The South Danvers Wizard
Feb. 13, 1861

SO. DANVERS PERIODICAL STORE.

J. CHANDLER & CO.,

WOULD respectfully announce to the citizens of South Danvers that they have taken part of the store occupied by D. B. Brooks & Bro., in Allen's Building, where they intend to keep a good supply of

Periodicals, Newspapers, Toys, &c.

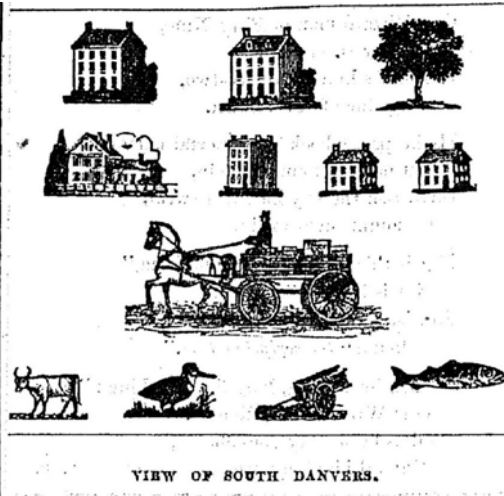
The Boston Daily Herald, Journal, and Traveller, and all the principal Weekly Papers and Periodicals, can always be found on their counter.

Dec 21-1860

From The South Danvers Wizard
Dec. 21, 1859

RATTLESNAKE KILLED.—On Wednesday afternoon last, Mr. Levi Farwell, of this town, while walking on the Lynnfield road, discovered and killed a large rattlesnake, between four and five feet in length, having eleven rattles, and, consequently, being about fourteen years old. Mr. Farwell presented his snake-ship to a "troop of youngsters," who brought him to this town, attracting considerable attention. This makes the second rattlesnake killed within a few days near the Camp ground.

From The South Danvers Wizard
July 31, 1861



From The South Danvers Wizard
Dec. 21, 1859

SOCIAL RE-UNION.—The Polkas will have a social Re-Union at Sutton Hall soon. Music by Upton's Quadrille Band. We believe this party will make about ten in all, given by them this season. The attendance has been respectable, the music good, and all have been satisfied.

From The South Danvers Wizard
March 27, 1861

THE COMET.—The celestial wanderer, now nightly seen in our north-western sky, came upon us quite suddenly. Sunday and Monday nights were cloudy, and on Tuesday evening it appeared in great brilliancy, to the astonishment of all star-gazers. Had it been clear on Sunday evening, it would probably have been then seen faintly visible near the horizon. It is likely also that on Saturday a careful observer might have seen part of its luminous train, but it would appear like an electric cloud. Each succeeding evening it rises from the horizon, according to our own observation, a space about equal to the distance of the stars from each other in the handle of the "Dipper."

From The South Danvers Wizard
July 10, 1861

SKATING.—We are glad to be able to say, for the benefit of those who enjoy this recreation, that there was good skating at Bancroft's Pond yesterday, and if no change of weather occurs between the writing of this item by us and the reading of it by you, the opportunity for this fine sport is still open.

From The South Danvers Wizard
Feb. 6, 1861

CATTLE SHOW.—The Cattle Show and Fair of the Essex Agricultural Society will be held in this town on Tuesday and Wednesday, September 24 and 25, 1861.

From The South Danvers Wizard
Sept. 11, 1861

DANCING ACADEMY

—AT—

SUTTON'S NEW HALL.



SCHOOL for instruction in Dancing on the AFTERNOONS of WEDNESDAY and SATURDAY, for Masters and Misses, Young Ladies and Gentlemen.

Mr Eben Upton jr. would respectfully announce to the Ladies and Gentlemen of So. Danvers and vicinity, that he proposes to form a class for juveniles and others as above, to commence as soon as a sufficient number can be obtained. The course of instruction to include Steps and Figures, Lanciers, Caledonia, Polka, Redowa, and Waltz Quadrilles, Schottische, Varsovienne, &c.

A subscription paper may be found at the store of Mr. T. A. Sweetser, where terms, reference, and particulars may be ascertained.

Jan 11-1861

From The South Danvers Wizard
Jan. 18, 1860

Works consulted for this newsletter:

- * Salem Gazette, 1781 to 1849
- * Essex Register, 1807-1827
- * New England Chronicle, 1775-1782
- * Boston News-Letter, 1704-1776
- * Boston Evening Post, 1735-1775
- * Boston Gazette, 1719-1820
- * Essex Gazette, 1768-1775
- * Peabody Press, 1868 to 1895
- * Peabody Progress, 1910
- * Peabody Enterprise, 1912-1930
- * South Danvers Wizard, 1859-1868
- * Vital Records to 1855, Danvers
- * History of the Town of Danvers From Its Earliest Settlement to 1848 by J. W. Hanson
- * Federal Census, 1790-1930
- * The Street Railway Journal, v. 7, 1891.
- * libcom.org/history